

Rta, Dharma, and Sanātana Dharma in Indian Culture: A Critical Appraisal

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Sanātana dharma literally means eternal law, principle or norm. But in order to understand the concept of *Sanātana dharma*, as it is used in our cultural heritage, it is important that we first have a working knowledge of what *dharma* stands for. The word *dharma* is not easily translated into the English language. *Dharma* has been used in different contexts to mean different things, but it is usually understood as that principle or law which sustains, supports or maintains (*dhāraṇa*)¹ individuals as well as the social order, and when applied beyond the context of society to a broader universal context, it would mean that law which sustains or maintains the world as a whole, the universe itself. It may mean a supporting principle that is inherent in things themselves; it may also denote that principle which needs to be followed for the sustenance of the individual and of society. Radhakrishnan in his *Religion and Society* talks of *dharma* as "the norm which sustains the universe, the principle of a thing by virtue of which it is what it is." In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*², we find *dharma* being identified with *satya* or truth and being extolled as the most powerful of all, stronger than even the ruling class. It is possible for a man who is righteous to vanquish one who is physically or otherwise strong, and therefore there is nothing greater than *dharma*.³

Rta of the *Ṛgveda*, as a matter of fact, is an antecedent of *dharma*, where it finds a more varied application, in the context of the universe, society as well as the life of individuals. The Vedic concept of *Rta* implies a cosmic order in the universe which cannot be superseded or undermined by any one, not even by gods, for they themselves are worshipped in the Vedas as the protectors or upholders of this principle⁴. *Rta* is supposed to govern the entire universe as a universal cosmic principle vouching for an invisible moral order also. Like

the Ṛgvedic *ṛta*, dharma too is supposed to have a supreme and an invisible authority in the context of human life and existence.

In our tradition, however, *dharma* has been practically identified with the *varṇāśrama dharma*, or the duties assigned to men in accordance with their particular class (*varṇa*) and station (*āśrama*) of life. Norms for people belonging to different classes, for example, Brāhmaṇa, Kṣattriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra, and also belonging to different stations of life such as *Brahmacarya* (student life), *Gārhasthya* (family life), *Vānaprastha* (life of retirement) and *Sannyāsa* (life of renunciation), are usually supposed to be fixed and they are not to be transgressed, if the social order is to be maintained. It is also seen as possessing a larger significance in view of the fact that it is supposed to sustain the individual in his spiritual progress towards perfection as also the society on the whole. Here also the maintenance or the sustenance (*dhāraṇa*) of a social order and also of the individual is fundamental to the concept of *dharma*. *Dharma* ensures worldly prosperity and also *mokṣa* (*yatōbhyudaya-niḥśreyasa siddhiḥ*).

There is also another usage, according to which *dharma* refers to certain customs, for example those of a class (*kula dharma*), those of a particular place (*deśa dharma*), rules of a particular period of time (*yuga dharma*), even certain provisions for deviation from normal rules at the critical time of adversity (*āpad dharma*), and so on. Even here *dharma* as that which sustains (*dhāraṇa*) governs the usage of *dharma*. *Dhāraṇa*, maintenance, or sustenance is thus the key-idea centering which the concept of *dharma* developed in our cultural heritage.

The question that usually arises in the context of *varṇāśrama dharma* is whether *varṇa* is to be determined by birth or by *guṇa* (quality) and *karma* (action)? The *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks of four *varṇas* (classes) determined by *guṇa* and *karma*, no doubt, but how does one come to have the *guṇa* and *karma* which determine his *varṇa*? Although there is no definite mention of birth in this connection, it cannot escape our notice that there is a sort of immutability involved in the concept of *varṇa* in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The *Gītā* speaks of *svadharma* (duty that is intrinsic to one) which is immutable and the idea is that no one should try to transgress the limits of his *svadharma* which is intimately connected with his *svabhāva* (intrinsic nature). *Svadharma* and *svabhāva* could, however, be seen to have a more dynamic base, in so far as they are connected with the changing *guṇas* and *karma*, and not with birth.

The point is more or less controversial, to say the least, and moreover, involves the ticklish question of justice also.

Here I would take for examination another important aspect to be considered in connection with *dharma*, namely what Sītā would designate as *sādhu dharma*, a *dharma* that respects the dignity of others as much as it respects one's own. Mark her words, in *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, Sundara Kāṇḍa, "yathā tava tathānyeṣāṃ ('as in your case, so in the case of others')", while giving advice to Rāvaṇa regarding protection of women in general, not only of one's own clan or community, "*Sādhu dharmamavekṣasva sādhu sādhuvrataṃ cara, Yathā tava tathānyeṣāṃ rakṣyā dārā niśācara*". It is based on the principle of universality in application. This was the universally applicable ethical principle advocated by Sītā as against the *Rākṣasa dharma* (group morality) proposed by the powerful king of Lankā, Rāvaṇa, "svadharmo rakṣasāṃ bhīru sarvadaiva na saṃśayaḥ, gamanaṃ vā parastrīṇāṃ haraṇaṃ saṃpramathya vā".⁵

Justice can be ensured if an equal treatment is meted out to people irrespective of whether they belong to us or they do not so belong. The concept of fairness, according to Rawls,⁶ is fundamental to justice. And the idea of fairness is inherent in the notion of *sādhu dharma* (ideal principle) as envisaged in the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* and propagated in the form of Sītā's advice to Rāvaṇa.

The sustenance value of *dharma*, according to me, though undoubtedly important, is not enough. Moreover, under certain circumstances, it may not be conducive to justice. Justice should not be sacrificed in the name of *dharma*; rather *dharma* should facilitate the implementation of justice in society. To me it appears that *varṇa dharma* can be an example of *sādhu dharma* if and only if the *varṇa vyavasthā* (class principle) is determined by *guṇa* and *karma* alone, as explicitly mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, not by birth. *Guṇa* and *karma* are not entirely determined by birth and heredity, after all; environment as well as personal efforts and aspirations of the individual have a significant role to play in this regard. And what is more, *guṇa* and *karma* are not fixed once and for all. But at the same time, it cannot be denied that strict *smṛti* laws pervaded the entire system of our social life throughout, with heredity as the determinant factor, while making room for undoubted departures and exceptions here and there, of course.⁷

It should appear to be somewhat revolutionary, therefore under such circumstances, to favour what I would call a dynamic *varṇa vyavasthā*, which would do justice to different sections at different

times according to their needs and deserts, and which could be regarded as *dharma* sustaining society on the principles of justice. *Dharma*, in this sense, would be dynamic, not static or fixed once and for all by birth. However, we have to admit at the same time that though it would be ideal to move away from the static *varṇa vyavasthā* that degenerates into reprehensible practices in a society under circumstances congenial for such a development, it is difficult, if not impossible, to keep the model of a dynamic *varṇa vyavasthā* intact as the *dharma* in practice for long, given the selfish and the monopolizing tendencies of individuals to appropriate the best for themselves, which may certainly not be on the basis of *guṇa* and *karma*. Society on the whole may in such a case need surgical treatment, so to say, at the hands of a great spiritual leader of the stature of Lord Kṛṣṇa who had not only to pin point the degeneration in *dharma*, but had also to point out in the *Bhagavad Gītā* that such degeneration of *dharma* or loss of balance is likely to occur not only once but also from time to time, when he would need to come again and again to set things on the track of *dharma*: “*Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati Bhārata*”, etc.

Another significant feature to be noted in the Indian context is that though *jāti dharma* (duty of the class) is considered invincible in its own sphere, it is never regarded as the *parama dharma*, the highest or the best duty/principle for everyone and under all possible circumstance. *Dharma* with all its rigidity, has never *completely* transcended the contingencies of place, time, and the nature of the particular agent in so far as its practical application is concerned; this is also another aspect of *dharma*, which cannot be entirely overlooked or underestimated. Stories from the *Mahabharata* and other ancient Indian literature bear testimony to this.

If *jāti dharma* is not the *parama dharma*, the highest or the best, what then would constitute the *parama dharma* in the Indian context? The highest, or the best model of conduct in the Indian tradition is expected from a *vidvān* in the sense of a *jñānī* (a wise man) or a *jīvanmukta* (the liberated person) who, though embodied, does not have any selfish desire and is engaged in activities out of a spontaneous overflow of the altruistic tendency⁸ *Jatī dharma* does not apply in the fourth or the last stage, i.e. the *sannyāsa āśrama*, of course, and the same is true of a *bhakta* (devotee), as also a *yogin*. In different contexts, either *bhakti*⁹ (devotion) or *yoga*¹⁰ (meditation) could be extolled as the *parama dharma*, as the case may be. The characteristics that are attributed to a true devotee, *jñānī* or a *yogī*

are more or less the same, where transcendence of some sort or the other is highlighted both in the personality and the conduct of these models of humanity. Such persons, being *guṇātīta*, transcend the three *guṇas*, are *sthitadhī* or *sthitaprajña* (men of balanced attitude and a tranquil mind) and are more or less *samadarśī* or *samabuddhi* (men with an impartial eye or mind) transcending the usual opposition and conflicts of duality such as pleasure and pain, gain and loss, good and evil, friendliness and enmity, and the like.¹¹ In a sense, the opposition between what is termed as *dharma* and *adharma* in the narrow sense is transcended at this highest stage of human development. Here man is supposed to be free from the dichotomy, the opposites of our narrow conceptions of *dharma* and *adharma*.¹² This is the manifestation of what I would call a unique culture of transcendence in our heritage.

Now coming to *sanātana dharma* or eternal, everlasting, law, we find that Hinduism is called *sanātana dharma* in our tradition. The expression which is found in the literature of traditional Hinduism refers to the unfailling, unshakable laws, those rules or norms, which have always been valid and are accepted in tradition. In the *Mahābhārata*, the words, “*eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ*” are used for sanctioning some social or religious norms as obligatory. In the *Dhammapada*, the well known Buddhist text, we find the expression “*eṣa dhammo sanantano*”, e.g. – “*Nahi berena berāni samantīdha kudacanaṃ, aberena ca sammanti eṣa dhammo sanantano*” (“It is an eternal principle that enmity is not pacified through enmity, or friendliness”). Manu speaks of the traditional norms and customs of the countries, castes, and families, which have been firmly established (*deśa dharmān jātidharmān kuladharmāṃ śca śāśvatān*) and also uses the expression to point to the particular norms for example, those for the king or the warrior. A code of war called *dharmayuddha* is also given by Manu.

The laws or norms may be modified from time to time according to the needs of society, perhaps, but the context of *dharma* in its essence seems to remain the same. That is how *dharma* is supposed to be *sanātana* or everlasting with something compelling about it. *Dharma* is the only friend, says Manu, that accompanies one even in death; all the rest perishes with the body. In spite of differences in respect of special *dharmas*, Manu speaks of *sāmānya dharmas*, in which irrespective of caste or station, five virtues constitute common *dharmas* for all, *ahimsā*, *satya*, *asteya*, etc.¹³

In case of *sanātana dharma*, the universality and the unshakable

characteristics are most important. Take the case of a simple dictum, e.g. in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Sundara Kāṇḍa, where it is pointed out that doing good to a person in exchange of some good done to one self by him is a firmly established norm (*Kṛte ca pratikartavyameṣa dharmāḥ sanātanaḥ*).¹⁴ These words are uttered by Maināka before Hanumān when the former, as a token of gratitude, invites the latter to take rest on his peak. Now it is not only an established norm that one ought to pay one's gratitude in return for the good done to him by someone else but there is also the implication here that it is a universal, unshakable and an unfailing norm to be followed by one and all. There is something compelling and everlasting about this principle or norm which ought to be followed by one and all irrespective of their specific commitments. *Sanātana dharma* thus refers to some such eternal and universal norm. When the *Rākṣasa Virādha*, however, instructs Rāma to throw his body inside a huge pit because it is the *sanātana dharma* that the dead bodies of Rākṣasas are disposed of in this manner, here *sanātana dharma* refers to something that is an established practice or custom, something merely traditional. "*Avate cāpi māṃ Rāma niṣṭipya kuśalī vraja, Rakṣasāṃ gatasattvānāmeṣa dharmāḥ sanātanaḥ*."¹⁵ It is important that both these aspects should be highlighted in the context of *sanātana dharma*, namely, its eternal and universal nature as well as its status as a well-established traditional norm, both of which aspects are found in the traditional literature. When the *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks of "*kuladharmāḥ sanātanaḥ*" or when Arjuna expresses his anxiety over the possible destruction of the established customs of caste and family¹⁶ there is evidently an emphasis on the traditional values of a particular society or clan. These established traditional values are binding of course but they can be modified according to circumstances; during the time of *āpad dharma* (the rule for the critical hour), when for example, *jāti dharma* or caste duties could undergo modification. But when Kṛṣṇa is regarded as "*Śaśvata dharma goptā*", he is to be regarded not merely as "a protector of the established norms", as Wilhelm Halbfass¹⁷ would call Him but the implication is that Kṛṣṇa is the protector of *dharma* which is universal and eternal, something that is binding for one and all.

When Hinduism as the *sanātana dharma* which literally means eternal religion in this particular context, has to be distinguished from other varieties of religion, we have to consider the following reasons. First of all, it is significant that Hinduism cannot be traced to any propounder or originator and therefore it cannot be traced

back to any specific date in the hoary past from which its tradition has come down to us. Even if it has undergone so many modifications during its development, at the same time it continues to be the same Hindu way of life governed by *dharma*, the universal rules or norms for which it has been known through the ages. This is one of the reasons why it is called *sanātana dharma*. It has been more or less identified with Vedic religion in this context based on the Vedic revelation, supposed to be infallible. "*Vedōkhilo dharmamūlam*" – this is fundamental to our tradition of *sanātana dharma*.

The Vedas have the status of the revealed text and that is why they are regarded as *śruti*, while other literatures like the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Āpastamba's *Dharma sūtra*, *Manu smṛti*, *Kapila smṛti*, etc., although considered quite important in the tradition, have got a secondary status in comparison with *śruti* texts and are regarded as *smṛti* or tradition depending on memory. The *smṛtis*, as the work of human authors dependent on human memory, cannot be infallible. Śaṅkarācārya is quite clear on this issue, as is evident from his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, 2.1.1., "*Smṛtyanavakāśa doṣa prasaṅga iti cet nānyasmṛtyanavakāśa doṣaprasaṅgāt*". Here Śaṅkara explicitly points out that "the authoritativeness of the Veda with regard to the matters stated by it is independent and direct, just as the light of the sun is the direct means of our knowledge of form and colour", (*Vedasya hi nirapekṣam svārthe prāmānyaṃ Raveriva rūpaviṣaye*). As far as the *smṛtis* are concerned, only those *smṛtis* which follow *śruti* are to be considered as authoritative, while all others are to be disregarded, says Śaṅkara, "*Śrutyanusārīṇyaḥ smṛtayaḥ pramāṇaṇi, anapekṣyā itarāḥ*". This is very much in keeping with the tradition of Mīmāṃsā,¹⁸ where *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra*, 1.3.3., states, "*Virodhe tvanapekṣam syādasti hyanumānam*". ("Where there is contradiction between *śruti* and *smṛti*, *smṛti* is to be disregarded; where there is no contradiction *smṛti* is to be recognised, as there is inference in that case of *smṛti* being founded on *śruti*").

But why exactly are these revealed texts, *śruti* as they are called, of paramount importance at all? Ācārya Śaṅkara and others have ascribed their infallibility to the fact that either they are not known to be created by any human being, they are *apauruṣeya* and eternal, or they owe their origin to an omniscient Being, i.e. God, and so on.

Bharṭhari points out that the different branches of learning which educate mankind have originated from the Vedas. "*Vidhātustasya lokānāṃ aṅgopāṅganibandhanāḥ, vidyābhedāḥ pratāyante jñānasamskārahetavaḥ*."¹⁹ According to the great commentator

Sāyaṇācārya, from the Vedas we learn of the extraordinary ways by which we can achieve our good and eradicate the evil: “*Iṣṭaprāptianiṣṭaparihārayoralaukikaṃ upāyaṃ yo vedayati sa Vedah*”. (That which cannot be known either through *pratyakṣa* (perception) or through *anumiti* (inference), that reality can be known only through the Vedas), ‘*Pratyakṣeṇānumityā vā yastūpāyo na budhyate, Eṇaṃ vidanti vedena tasmād Vedasya vedatā*” (as quoted by Sāyaṇa). According to Manu, the Vedas are like the eyes eternal through which everything can be seen or known, (“*Pitṛdevamanuṣyaṅāṇaṃ Vedaścakṣuḥ sanātanaṃ, aśakyaṃ cāprameyanca Vedaśāstramitisthitih*”).”

The Veda, according to Halbfass,

contains a great variety of form of expression and instructions. It documents the thought of many centuries, and reflects fundamental changes in orientation. But, in a sense, it is this internal multiplicity and variety itself, this challenging and suggestive chaos, that accounts for the significance of the Veda in Hindu philosophy. It provides an elusive and ambiguous guidance, an open, yet authoritative framework, with suggestive hermeneutic patterns and precedents and inherent appeals to human reflexivity.²⁰

Though I have little difficulty in broadly agreeing with what Halbfass says about the Vedic authority, it is not clear to me why he talks of “chaos” and “elusive and ambiguous guidance” in the context of Vedic literature. The Vedas certainly do not deserve such downright condemnation, at least no more than any other revealed text or world-literature for that matter. Such derogatory terms could be applied as a matter of fact to any richly suggestive literature, so long as we are inclined to find fault with the same. The real cause of the attraction of the Vedas, according to me, consists in its antiquity along with its highly suggestive character, rather than its chaotic or ambiguous character. Yāska has talked of several interpretations of the Vedas. The different interpretations are possible because of this highly suggestive character of the Vedic literature which has come down to us in different phases from the most ancient times. We do not know about any author of this vast literature and it is also not possible on our part to assume that the Veda owes its origin to a particular sage or seer. The Vedas are rather revelations manifesting themselves for the benefit of entire mankind from the earliest times, revelations that were received by the earliest receptive spirit of man. That is why the Vedas stand on a separate footing, so to say. It is undoubtedly most significant that when we speculate about the origin of the Veda, we cannot ascribe its origin to any particular man, any particular *ṛṣi*.

The ṛṣi only is the receptacle of the revelation. It is this, that endows the Vedas with a unique and a sort of primeval attraction in the mind of man. When we attempt to fix the date of the *R̥gveda*, we find a great deal of controversy amongst the Eastern and the Western scholars. However, there is no doubt that it is "the oldest literary monument of the Indo-European languages"²¹ which speaks of its antiquity. This antiquity along with the highly suggestive literature developing through different phases of *Karmakāṇḍa*, *Jñānkāṇḍa*, etc. on which a variety of interpretations could be put, has made it permanently attractive to the human mind, and its unique position as a revealed text is also ensured by these very characteristics.

It must be admitted however that scholars like Halbfass have made a genuine attempt at understanding and assessing the exact significance of the Vedic authority in the framework of what is known as the Vedic religion, although his remark, as already pointed out, has been somewhat off the mark and careless in certain respects. The remarks of scholars such as Ariel Glucklich, are by comparison astonishingly naive and deliberately offensive, I should say, when seen in the framework of fresh attempts made by such scholars to reaffirm the henotheistic or the kathenotheistic thesis of Max Muller, while ignoring altogether the essence of the Vedic religion namely, the revelation of one ultimate reality assuming different names and forms (*Ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*), a point that has been frequently highlighted by scholars of Vedic culture like G.C. Pande.²² It is indeed ridiculous when Glucklich speaks of "the worship of a series of gods as the supreme god," as "the theological equivalent of serial monogamy"²³ with obnoxious implications such as "I love you, Indra/baby, and have never loved any other god/woman", "I love you, Visnu/baby, and have never loved any other god/woman". Could there be a greater travesty of truth! I am reminded of a "celebrated passage" from Bradley's *The Principles of Logic* to which T.S. Eliot refers in admiration,²⁴ where Bradley is attacking in his inimitable style the theory of association of ideas according to Bain. Here also, adopting the imagery of Bradley, I would say that Glucklich seems to have given himself up most uncritically, like a bewildered infant, to the influence of the goddess Primitive Credulity who whispers into his ears, "I love you Visnu" is inextricably associated with "I love you, baby, and have never loved another woman." I wonder if it may not be advisable for Glucklich to begin to suspect the wholesomeness of that influence instead of accepting the goddess in question as "the mistress of his life", and whether he should not

“wake up indignant at the kindly fraud” by which the goddess has deceived him right and left.

Some of those who would contrast the universality of Hinduism, as *sanātana dharma*, with other varieties of world religions claim that with all its variations Hinduism carries within its bosom, the essence and the spirit of the diversities of world religions and therefore it is itself an eternal religion. “Hinduism alone was supposed to provide the framework for fulfilling the universal potential inherent in the various religions” and therefore in this context the expression *sanātana dharma* has remained “a concept of self-assertion”.²⁵ Swami Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan have emphasized these universal elements in Hinduism *vis a vis* other world religions. Radhakrishnan, for example, maintains that “the Vedānta is not a religion, but religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance”.²⁶ Swami Vivekananda, in a speech delivered in India, has asserted.

Ours is the universal religion. It is inclusive enough, it is broad enough to include all the ideas. All the ideas of religion that already exist in the world can be immediately included, and we can patiently wait for all the ideals that are to come in the future to be taken in the same fashion, embraced in the infinite arms of the religion of the Vedānta.

These all-pervasive and universal characteristics of Hinduism are emphasized *vis a vis* other world religions when it is called the *sanātana dharma* or the perennial, eternal religion. Halbfass has very ably brought out the various implications of this idea by clearly pointing out that ‘Hinduism as the *sanātana dharma* is not a religion among religions; it is said to be the “eternal religion”, the basis and ingredient of all religions, a kind of “meta religion”, a structure potentially ready to comprise and reconcile within itself all the religions of the world just as it contains and reconciles the so-called Hindu sects, such as Śaivism or Vaiṣṇavism and their subordinate “sectarian formations”.²⁷

It may be in a certain sense meaningful to emphasize those universalistic elements in the development of Hinduism that have survived through the ages and have either found their replica, so to say, in other religions or have been developed in other world religions independently through their seers. But this cannot justify the attitude of some *sanātanis* (followers of Hinduism as the eternal religion), as they are called, who consider every other form of religion as somewhat inferior with the designation of *mleccha dharma* (religion of the aliens, the *mlechhas*), as Halbfass would tell us.²⁸ Expression

of superior airs by such "followers of the eternal religion", *sanātānis* or *sanātana dharmāvalambins*, as they are called, might have had some practical necessity perhaps in the past, in the historical context, but it is not true of any genuine form of Hinduism as *sanātana dharma* which emphasizes the universalistic and eternal principles without any superiority complex whatsoever. The following observations made in the context of Gandhi and *sanātana dharma* are quite illuminating in this connection. Zaehner says:

Gandhi, "may have been and indeed was influenced by all kinds of non-Hindu ideas, but he was deeply rooted in, and drew his strength from, the *sanātana dharma* of his native land, not the *dharmā* of the law-book and Brāhmins, but the *dharmā* that rests on *ahimsā*, truth, renunciation, passionlessness, and an equal love for all God's creatures, the *dharmā* of Yudhiṣṭhira, the king of Righteousness and Truth."²⁹

Hinduism as *sanātana dharma*, the universalistic perennial religion, can be meaningful, from a genuine Hindu point of view, only within a context where the entire world is taken to be one family ('*Vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*', '*yatra viśvaṃ bhavatyekanīḍam*'). The fundamental truth here is supposed to have been realized by the Vedic seer who does not point to any superiority or inferiority of any particular group or community but only makes a frank and a candid acknowledgment of the fact that the same truth or reality is called by different names, by the different sages ("*Ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*").³⁰

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *The Mahābhārata*, "Dhāraṇād dharmamityāhuḥ dharmo dhārayati prajāḥ".
2. *Bṛhdāraṇyaka Uṇ*. 1.4.14. "Tadetat Kṣatrasya kṣatram yad dharmastasmāddharmāt paraṃ nāstyatho abalīyān balīyānsamasaṃsate dharmena yathā rājñaivaṃ yo vai sa dharmāḥ satyaṃ vai tat."
3. Tulsidas, *Rāmcarit Mānas*, Yuddha kāṇḍa, "Sakhā dharmamaya asa ratha jāke, Jitana kahun na katahun ripu tāke".
4. *R̥gveda*, 1.1.8, "Gopāmr̥tasya dīdiviṃ".
5. *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, Sundara Kāṇḍa, 20.5 and also 21.7.
6. John Rawls, 'Justice as Fairness', *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXVII, April, 1958.
7. R.K. Pruthi and R. Devi, *History of Indian Culture*, Jaipur, 2000, p. 33, where reference is given to some departures from the strict *smṛti* law in the

- background of a general hereditary system prevailing in society on the whole: "We may quote by way of evidence the high authority of Hiuen Tsang, himself an intelligent foreigner belonging to a different faith, who not only refers to the four hereditary castes of Indian society together with their respective occupation, but adds that the members of a caste group marry within the caste.... Nevertheless there were in the Gupta Age as in earlier times undoubted departures from the strict *smṛti* law".
8. Ācārya Śaṅkara, *Viveka Cuḍāmaṇi*, 'Śāntā mahānto nivasanti santo vasantavallokaḥitaṃ carantaḥ' etc.
 9. *Sṛīmad Bhāgavata*, "Sa vai puṁsāṃ paro dharmo yato bhaktiradhokṣaje".
 10. *The Bhagavad Gītā*. "Yogī paraṃ sthānamupaiti cādyam", and also "Ayaṃ tu paramo dharmah yad yogenātmadarśanaṃ" and "Nāsti yogasamaṃ balaṃ", as quoted in Gopinath Kaviraj, *Notes on Religion and Philosophy*, Varanasi, 1987, p. 199.
 11. *Ibid.* "Suhṛnmītrāryudāsīno madhyastha dveṣyabandhuṣu, sādhuṣvapi ca pāpeṣu samabuddhirviśiṣyate", and also "Śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍītāḥ samadarśinaḥ".
 12. *The Mahābhārata*, XII, 337. 40, "Tyaja dharmamadharmaṅca ubhe satyānrte tyaja, ubhe satyānrte tyaktvā yena tyajasi tattyaaja," etc.
 13. *Manu Smṛti*, 10.63. "Ahimsā satyamasteyaṃ śaucamindriya nigrahaḥ" etc.
 14. *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Sundara Kāṇḍa, 1-113.
 15. *Ibid.*, Araṇya Kāṇḍa, 4.22.
 16. *The Bhagavadgītā*, I, "Utsādyante jātīdharmā kuladharmāśca śāśvatāḥ."
 17. W. Halbfass, *India and Europe*, State University of New York Press, 1988, p. 344.
 18. *Smṛtiprāmāṇyādīkaraṇa*, śṛuti-prābalyādīkaraṇa etc. in the *Mīmāṃsā sūtras*, for Jaimini's approach to *Smṛti*.
 19. *Vākyapadīya*. 1.10.
 20. W. Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection*, State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 40.
 21. A.C. Macdonnell, *A Vedic Reader*, Oxford University Press, 1951, *Introduction*, p. xi. Cf. Dayakrishna, *Bharatiya Darsana, Ek Nayi Drsti*, (in Hindi) Jaipur, 2000, p. 69, where he speaks of some older religious literatures of civilizations like those of Egypt and Mesopotamia but at the same time points out that, none of these being comparable to the Vedic treatise, the uniqueness of the Vedas (*Veda kī apūrvatā*) remains unaffected and unchallenged thereby.
 22. G.C. Pande, *Ekaṃ Sad Viprā Bahudhā Vadani*, Varanasi, 1977.
 23. Ariel Glucklich, *The Sense of Adharma*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 178.
 24. T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, London, 1932, 1969, chapter on "Francis Herbert Bradley, 1927".
 25. Halbfass, *India, and Europe*, p. 346.

26. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu view of Life*, Blackies & Son, 1979, 1983, p. 18.
27. Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection*, p. 51.
28. Halbfass, *India and Europe*, p. 260.
29. R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 174.
30. Pande, op. cit., pp. 40-41, "Nirvikalpōparicchinñōnantaśca paramārtha itī tu sarvatra sammatameva. Sa ca lokottaraḥ paramārthaḥ samarpitākhilācāreṇa svātmanaiva maunena sāḥṣādadhigamya ityapi sarvatra pratipannaṃ jñānibhiḥ Sarvadharmābhedaṃ pratipitsunā tattvaviṣayāstārkikā vikalpā ācāravidhisamskṛtāśca lokarūḍhayo gauṇatvena draṣṭavyāḥ anubhūtimātre ca parisphūradbhūmābhāsaḥ parāmarśāṇīyo bhāvānīyaśca. Svānubhūtyekamānāyeti yaduktaṃ tadeva sarvasvaṃ dharmatattvasya. Tadeva guhānihitaṃ dharmatattvamuddiśyoktamṛṣiṇā. "Ekaṃ sad viprā bahudhā vadantīti."